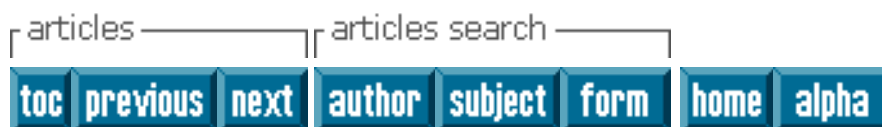


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The white concentration camps of the Anglo-Boer War: a debate without end

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ABSTRACT

This article gives an overview of some of the most important historiographical contributions on the white concentration camps the British erected during the Anglo-Boer War. This is followed by a criticism of two recent publications - Liz Stanely's book *Mourning Becomes... Post/memory, Commemoration and the Concentration Camps of the South African War* (2006, with a first South African edition in 2008), and Elizabeth van Hey "A Tool for Modernisation? The Boer Concentration Camps of the South African War, 1900-1902", in *Science* (2010). Despite quite some merit, both publications are criticised for their subjectivity. It is cor much more complicated and nuanced than the portrayal provided by these writers.

Keywords: Afrikaner nationalism; Anglo-Boer War; British Blue Books; concentration camps; Elizabeth Hobhouse; E. Neethling; Liz Stanley; post/memory; sanitation.

OPSOMMING

Hierdie artikel verskaf eers 'n oorsig van die belangrikste historiografiese bydraes oor die blanke kons Britte tydens die Anglo-Boereoorlog opgerig het. Dit word gevolg deur kritiek op twee onlangse publi

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boek *Mourning Becomes... Post/memory, Commemoration and the Concentration Camps of the South African War* (eerste Suid-Afrikaanse uitgawe in 2008), en Elizabeth van Heyning se artikel getiteld "A Tool for Mourning: The Concentration Camps of the South African War, 1900-1902", in die *South African Journal of Science* (2010). Hierdie meriete word albei publikasies gekritiseer vir hul subjektiwiteit. Daar word besluit dat die waarheid verduidelik en genuanseerd is as die uitbeelding deur hierdie skrywers.

Sleutelwoorde: Afrikaner-nasionalisme; Anglo-Boereoorlog; Britse Blouboeke; Elizabeth van Heyning Neethling; konsentrasiekampe; Liz Stanley; post/memory; sanitasie.

From time to time the debate on white and black concentration camps in the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902 seems that there is no end in sight. In the past three to four decades the discussion on the black camps, which was long undisclosed for so long has come to the fore, which in itself sheds a very interesting light both on the war and on the politics in the Anglo-Boer War and the political and historiographical climate of the period in which they are written. However, they are, however, still drawn from time to time on the white camps, and the writings of Afrikaner and English (and also African and British) historians still persist in presenting viewpoints that range from attempts at objectivity to plain bad history.

Apart from the availability of (unpublished) archival material in among others the British National Archives in London, the African National Archives in Pretoria and Bloemfontein and the War Museum of the Boer Republics in Johannesburg, an important source of publications on the Boer as well as the British side became available in the 40 years following the war. On the British side there were in particular the official publications, the so-called Blue Books, which date from the war itself and are indicated by the letters Cd. This series includes: Cd. 35, *Correspondence with the President of the Orange Free State Respecting the War* (1900); Cd. 426, *Proclamations Issued by Field-Marshal Buller in South Africa* (1900); Cd. 524, *Return of Buildings Burnt in Each Month from June 1900 to January 1901, in the Orange Free State, Mills, Cottages and Hovels* (1901); Cd. 582, *Correspondence between the Commander-in-Chief in South Africa and the Commanders so far as it Affects the Destruction of Property* (1901); Cd. 819, *Reports, etc., on the Working of the Concentration Camps in the Transvaal, Orange River Colony, Cape Colony and Natal* (1901); Cd. 853, *Further Papers relating to the Working of the Concentration Camps in the Transvaal, Orange River Colony, Cape Colony and Natal* (1901); Cd. 893, *Report on the Concentration Camps in Africa by the Committee of Ladies Appointed by the Secretary of State for War containing Reports on the Concentration Camps in the Orange River Colony and the Transvaal* (1902); Cd. 902, 934 and 936, *Further Papers relating to the Working of the Concentration Camps in Africa* (1902); Cd. 939, 942 and 1161, *Statistics of the Refugee Camps in South Africa* (1902); Cd. 979, *Return of Buildings Destroyed in Cape Colony and Natal Destroyed by the Boers* (1902).

Like the source publications on the Boer side, the British Blue Books obviously provide a mass of invaluable material. The historian should treat them critically. Historians do not appear to take the methodological questions "What is the document?" and "Did the author have any ideological interest in the events?", into account in all instances.

On the Boer side, there are the well-known publications by Emily Hobhouse defending the Boer cause and *and where it Fell*, published in 1902,² she alternated the fresh memories of her camp visits with quotations from official documents. This was followed in 1924, by her *War without Glamour*,³ in which she included diary entries (written during or shortly after the war) by several Boer women. Hobhouse also acted as translator and editor of the diary of Alie Badenhorst of Hartbeestfontein in the western Transvaal, entitled *Tant Alie of Transvaal: Her Diary* (1984). In 1984, Rykie van Reenen edited a number of Hobhouse's letters from the Anglo-Boer War under the title *Emily Hobhouse's Letters*.

After the end of the Anglo-Boer War and particularly in the 1930s and 1940s, a surge of reminiscences appeared, written by Boer women. The publication of these ego documents went hand in hand with the rise of Afrikaner nationalism. The first was the book by Mrs E. Neethling, the widow of Ds H.L. Neethling, a Dutch Reformed minister in Utrecht in the Transvaal. In 1902 she published *Should we Forget?*,⁶ a record of her own reminiscences of the war, of the earth policy and the concentration camps, together with the reminiscences of other Boer women that she had collected.

written up. In 1917, she followed this with a totally new publication which appeared in Dutch, with the title *Vergeten?*⁷ This book included a number of concentration camp statements collected in about 1904 by a sheet called Transvaaler. In 1938, *Vergeten?* was published in Afrikaans with the title *Mag ons Vergeet?*, a chauvinistic series, *Ons Geskiedenis*.⁸

In 1925, Mrs M.M. Postma privately published *Stemme uit die Vrouekampe*,⁹ a collection of sworn statements, made between 1916 and 1923 by Boer women who had been in the concentration camps. The book was published in Afrikaans in the year that Afrikaans replaced Dutch as one of the country's two official languages. A second edition fourteen years later with the title *Stemme uit die Verlede*.¹⁰

Other sworn statements by Boer women about the brutality they and their children had suffered in the concentration camps were collected by General J.B.M. Hertzog and published by Andries Raath in 1993 as number 4 of the *Konsentrasiekamp-Vroueleed*.¹¹ The other four issues in the same series comprise quotations from original reminiscences of women who were in the camps, including the diary of Ds A.D. Lückhoff in the Bethulie camp.¹² Lückhoff's diary was published in 1993 as *Woman's Endurance*, and a facsimile edition appeared in 2006.¹³

Apart from many unpublished diaries, reminiscences and letters in local archives and museums, particularly at the Museum of the Boer Republics in Bloemfontein, various diaries and reminiscences appeared in print. Brandt-van Warmelo published *Het Concentratie-Kamp van Iréne*.¹⁴ Another edition of her diary appeared in 1993, edited by Grobler as editor.¹⁵ In 1905, J. van Helsdingen's *Vrouwenleed: Persoonlijke Ondervindingen in den Boerewoestijn* was published.¹⁶

It is clear that the rise of Afrikaner nationalism led to the surge of publications on reminiscences of the concentration camps. This is evident not only from the title, but also the Preface of Hendrina Rabie-van der Merwe's *Onthou die Galg*, where she writes that the symbolic ox wagon trek during the centenary of the Great Trek and the unveiling of the Voortrekker monument in 1938, had "roused" her to compile her collection. "Mag my boek daarvoor dien as 'n om nasieliefde in die boesem van ons opkomende geslagte aan te kweek, totdat hulle die toppunt bereik het om hul lewe neer te lê, soos ons voorgeslagte gedoen het, vir VADERLAND, VRYHEID en REG."¹⁷

Other camp diaries and reminiscences appeared in print after the zenith of Afrikaner nationalism. The *Fischer se Kampdagboek*, in 1964,¹⁸ and *'n Bethulie-Kampdogter*, edited by Kezia Hamman, in 1965.¹⁹ In 1965, Rensburg edited the *Camp Diary of Henrietta E.C. Armstrong* in the source publication series produced by the Historical Research Council.²⁰

The debate between Afrikaans and English speaking historians on the white concentration camps started in 1941 with the publication of Ewald Steenkamp's emotional *Helkampe*.²¹ In the same year, Napier Devine published *Concentration Camps in South Africa during the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902*. In his Preface he explained that he had been to counteract some of the wild statements and wrong conclusions made and published about the camps, and referred specifically to Steenkamp in his text.²²

From the 1950s, several works appeared that took a standpoint on the concentration camps. In 1957, A. J. Rensburg published *The Concentration Camps 1900-1902: Facts, Figures and Fables*, to J.C. Otto's animated and sometimes very critical *Konsentrasiekampe*.²³ In 1958, Edgar Holt (*The Boer War*) missed, or perhaps sidestepped, the terror of the camps by stating: "The British purpose was to save women and children from almost certain death on the open veld. A more balanced view came in the 1960s with J.L. Hattingh's academic treatise on the Irene concentration camp. More than 25 years later by the academic works by Johan Wassermann and Annette Wohlberg on the Irene and Bethulie concentration camps respectively.²⁶

Although Byron Farwell revealed great sensitivity for the topic in his *The Great Anglo-Boer War* in 1976, he equated the British scorched earth policy with the Boers' decision to burn down the homes of "handsealers" and left them homeless.²⁷ Thomas Pakenham presented a colourful yet balanced account of the concentration camps in his *Boer War* (1979), and revealed Lord Kitchener's steely heartlessness over the loss of human lives in general, with

Roberts's lion's share in the origin and execution of the scorched earth policy.²⁸

However, no work on the scorched earth policy and its influence on the white and black civilians has a standing and balance of S.B. Spies with his scholarly *Methods of Barbarism?* in 1977.²⁹ For the South African Spies there are no simple explanations, and yet he shows understanding and empathy beyond measure. As a colleague of his it always struck me that his aversion to the Afrikaner's implementation of apartheid in the twentieth century did not prevent him from looking dispassionately and objectively at the experience of children in the Anglo-Boer War.

A relatively unknown contribution is the *five-volume Die Lotgevalle van die Burgerlike Bevolking Gedurende die Boereoorlog, 1899-1902*, by the former state historian, J. Ploeger, published in 1990 by the South African Historical Society. Although an official publication and forming part of the Afrikaner literature that condemned the concentration camps without merit and deserves wider acknowledgement because of its sober discussion on the development of the scorched earth policy and its consequences.

At the time of the centenary of the Anglo-Boer War, I was editor of *Scorched Earth* (also published in Afrikaans as *Aarde*), which enjoyed wide interest that was fanned by the TV documentary of the same title.³¹ Both volumes came under scrutiny and Afrikaans and black authors alike contributed to the project. It struck me that the project came from three areas: Those who were delighted that the suffering of the Afrikaner at the hands of the British was again to carry over to the next generation; those who became aware of the suffering for the first time and were surprised at its intensity; and those who saw the Afrikaners and black people, as common victims of apartheid, something which they felt could contribute to nation building. Also striking was Afrikaners' realization that their ancestors had also been exposed to crimes against humanity during the Anglo-Boer War - this directly informed the Truth and Reconciliation Commission where the atrocities of some Afrikaners in the police and other institutions of the apartheid era were exposed.

In the wake of the centenary, Andries Raath was commissioned by the Volkskomitee vir die Herdenking van die Vryheidsoorlog, to write two volumes on the Boer women in the Anglo-Boer War with an Afrikaner flavor. The subtitles of the volumes (*Moederleed and Kampsmarte*), point unmistakably to a strong focus on Afrikaans women and the impact of British imperialism.³²

Paul Alberts acted as compiler for *Die Smarte van Oorlog* (2005), a publication which was the first contribution to the *van Ons Vaad're* series - already an emotionally charged name. It is a translation of Emily Hobhouse's *Where it Fell*. The subtitle, *Verontregting van Boerevroue en Kinders tydens die Anglo-Boereoorlog (1899-1902)*, is in an emotional category as Raath's above-mentioned publication. However, in the Preface I make the point that the Anglo-Boer War was not in all ways unique: "Miskien moet ons hierdie lyding wyer bekyk, en besef dat baie ander oorloë lyding ervaar het".³³

In the past decade British and South African English-speaking historians, notably Liz Stanley of the University of Cambridge and Elizabeth van Heyningen of the University of Cape Town, have tried to put the concentration camps in a broader context and emphasise aspects other than the suffering and deaths. Stanley reveals an annoyance with the subject matter, her own reminiscences, particularly those in the 1930s and 1940s, while Van Heyningen concentrates on the moral implications of the deaths in the camps.

Recently I was approached by two Afrikaans newspapers to comment on the publications by these two historians. Stanley's book is entitled *Mourning Becomes... Post/memory, Commemoration and the Concentration Camps of the Anglo-Boer War* (2006, with a first South African edition in 2008),³⁴ and an article by Elizabeth van Heyningen, "A Tool for the Boer Concentration Camps of the South African War, 1900-1902", published in a 2010 issue of the *South African Journal of Science*.³⁵ The questions I asked throughout were: How objective are these publications, and how prudent are the authors in exploring their sources?

I read Stanley's book with fluctuating sentiments of approval and rejection. It is based on a mixture of primary and secondary findings in which she has allowed herself to become personally involved. Academic, because Stanley's research is based on praiseworthy archival and secondary research and has made a number of good points. Involved, because

deceased Boer children and confesses that the deaths should not have happened, but simultaneously point out the exploitation of post/memory by Afrikaner nationalist opinion makers (cultural entrepreneur) and Afrikaner dominance - and in the process, she draws some blatantly subjective, incorrect conclusions.

The book is about the process of "post/memory" but also the convenient "forgetting" by the Afrikaner Anglo-Boer War. "Post/memory" in this context is explained as the experience of those who grow up with memories that preceded their birth, or that these narratives or reminiscences later undergo appropriate changes to fit the current nationalism.³⁶

Let me begin with the positive aspects of the book.

Probably Stanley's most important verdict, one that cannot be faulted, is that "nothing about the content can be accepted on trust, for so much of it has been reworked and overworked for political purposes and to highlight certain qualities".³⁷ However, it is amazing that she accepts this verdict as applicable to the reminiscences of women. She does not question the veracity of the British documentation as published in the official Blue Books. Neethling points out the subjectivity of E. Neethling's *Should We Forget?* (1902) and calls it an example of the "testimonies". I fully agree with her about the subjectivity of Rabie-Van der Merwe's *Onthou!* (1940).³⁸ But surely the same can be said for those who are sworn) that Neethling published in *Vergeten?* (1917 and in 1938 in *Mag Ons Vergeef?*), and M.M. Potgieter's *Vrouekampe* (1925), cannot be rejected completely as inventions, notwithstanding Stanley's impressive theory? The fact that Stanley is correct that these publications were intended to promote Afrikaner nationalism is not the content, stripped of its emotive language, completely unacceptable evidence. Were all these women

A second praiseworthy contribution is about "forgetting": Stanley shows us that where initially the history was written from the point of view of the white camps and ignored black camps, there is now also a focus on black camps. What has been forgotten, is what lay between - the fate of black people in the white camps and the fate of Boer men ("harmless" in the white camps. She points out correctly that the convenient "forgetting" was committed by Afrikaner cultural entrepreneurs to *the volk* of their own dead and to ensure that "the others" do not count.³⁹

A third aspect in which she is probably correct is her viewpoint that the lists of names of the dead on the walls of the concentration camps are not about individuals, but that they became a public remembrance of "our dead" and are commemorated by "the volk" - a cry for national sentiment par excellence.⁴⁰ Perhaps Stanley should also mention that thousands of amateur genealogists nowadays find the individual names very useful.

In the fourth place, we should take note of Stanley's findings on the deaths in tents and hospitals. Afrikaner women that the women refused to allow their sick to be admitted to hospitals because they experienced that not all of these hospitals were alive. However, Stanley has found that the documents of the Springfontein and Middelburg show that many more people died in their tents than in the hospitals. She tells us:

Regarding these camps at least, then, the "truisms" about murdering doctors and the hospitals ; the deaths of children almost inevitably died contained in women's testimonies and enshrined in the post/memory of the concentration camps are demonstrably untrue.⁴¹

Finally, Stanley is correct in dismissing Neethling's idyllic description of the "harmonious relationship" between the white and black as folly.⁴² That relationship was harmonious because generally the arrogant Boer preferred it that way from an inferior position realised that the Boer demanded it should be like that.

For the rest, Stanley's book is a mixture of subjective, faulty and ignorant viewpoints and remarks that are directed against the Afrikaner - the Afrikaner she alleges has misused the suffering and deaths in the concentration camps for nationalism, with which he (the masculine "he") came to power and applied apartheid. Towards the end of the book where she directs her commentary to Johan van Rooyen, author of a book on the Afrikaner diaspora: "The Afrikaner has a hundred years to mess it up, so it'll probably take their lot four hundred years to put it right."⁴³

The reason why I put the book down very soon after my initial attempt to read the first edition in 2006 was my lack of involvement with her topic. It is not clear to me whether it is because she is a sociologist or a postmod

quite comfortable to quote James Young, a writer on the Holocaust: "I become part of their performan objectivity. She tells us of her morose reception by an Afrikaner woman in the library in Brandfort and Verwoerd against the wall upset her.⁴⁵ Clearly she did not realise, or perhaps it did not matter to her, t Brandfort. The acid test would have been whether she would have objected if a photograph of Winnie who was confined to Brandfort by the apartheid government, had hung there instead.

One of the most irritating mistakes is Stanley's accusation that Afrikaans writers "have implied or state camps of the Anglo-Boer War were direct precursors of the Nazi concentration camps.⁴⁶ Besides the fa of J.H. Breytenbach's works from 1949 in her bibliography (and which she obviously has not consulte there or in the other works that she provides in her endnote - J.C. Otto, Ewald Steenkamp, M.C.E. van S any comparison between the two kinds of camps. These writers were too subjectively involved with th the Anglo-Boer War to pay any attention to the Nazi camps. Photographs, says Stanley, were interprete the lens of the Nazi future".⁴⁷ The problem is that Stanley completely over-estimates the Afrikaners' av camps. The Second World War was in Europe, far away, and the Nazi camps did not concern them. The author listed in Stanley's bibliography that draws this parallel is Owen Coetzer, who as an English-spe family who were involved in the war, might have been closer to events in Europe. It is Stanley who int the lens of the Nazi future.

Stanley almost has a mission to denigrate the Afrikaner's admiration for Emily Hobhouse. She does n Hobhouse's role in Britain to expose the suffering in the camps and basically to force the government Commission (whose recommendations led to a dramatic drop in the number of deaths). Stanley indic memoirs of 1924 admit to some factual errors that she made in her reports and her book in 1901/1902 casts suspicion over all Hobhouse's earlier findings. When she quotes Hobhouse as requesting the Se immediately because 3 245 children had died in three months, Stanley asserts that Hobhouse wrote th had failed to act and that she was probably annoyed at not being included in the Ladies Commission. fame into Hobhouse's life. She was probably more afraid that the pro-government ladies would put th in a good light.

On the actions of N.J. Scholtz, superintendent of the Irene camp, Stanley again renders herself guilty o She testifies that an Afrikaans sociology colleague told her that Scholtz had put ground glass into peop their children to hospital where they were killed, "and he [Scholtz] was universally hated for his cruelty has traced a petition in the William Cullen Library in Johannesburg, signed by several hundred Boer w who bless him "for saving many lives and regret he is leaving".⁴⁹ Perhaps Stanley should (as she plea historian), be more critical of her source. Yes, the "glass" was sugar crystals and the British authorities inmates, but has Stanley ever given it a thought that the "several hundred Boer women" who signed th the wives of "handsuppers", or, as she dismisses on p. 30, that the petition might indeed have been pr why I state this is because the fiery Johanna (Brandt) van Warmelo - a nurse in the camp - was extreme her diary inscriptions of 25 May, 11 June and 13 July 1901. On 21 December 1901, she even remarked t if she heard that he had been murdered!⁵⁰ Most importantly, the petition on the many lives that Schol incorrect, because Scholtz departed on 8 July 1901, and for June the number of Irene deaths was 131 - Potchefstroom, Middelburg and Bloemfontein.⁵¹ Although Stanley lists Brandt's diary as a source, she carefully.

Stanley complains about the complete anonymity of the black dead in the concentration camps in con deceased whose names have been inscribed on graves and marble slabs.⁵² The Afrikaner nationalist g entrepreneurs surely cannot be blamed for this different treatment. At no time, even in the very early s names of the black deceased recorded on gravestones or elsewhere. Neither the British camp authorit whose family members had died, elected to record such deaths. At the time, black people generally w record the names of their next of kin themselves, as was the practice in white camps.

There are examples of condemnation for Boer action where Stanley fails to understand the circumstan objection voiced by the Boer women in the camps was that they were treated like (or lower than) black misinterpretation of the real Boer objection - that they had been removed by the British from their bu

humiliating manner, and that the British were responsible for the suffering and the deaths. The question is: Is Stanley a racist? Stanley transposes her own 2006 consciousness of black people's suffering onto 1901 - this is ahistorical.

One of Stanley's major objections is that the rhetoric of the Boer post/memory is one-sided and mainly focuses on the journey from the farms and the journey to the camps, rather than everyday life in the camps. She asserts that the camps are presented not as a part of war, but as the unaccountable punishment of innocents.⁵³ Let us agree that the descriptions are indeed full of emotion and subjectivity. But is it not emphasised in these writings, and the descriptions are indeed full of emotion and subjectivity. But is it not that highly traumatic experiences tend to engulf any thought of writing about the daily grind of humdrum life? For those Boer women the traumatic experience of losing their homes literally before their eyes; the destruction of accumulated property; the forced removal to the concentration camps; the suffering and deaths; all of these are what the indignation of the Afrikaner women was all about; this is what made them worthy of being written down. It is noticeable that Stanley does not subject the biased and jingoistic medical staff and camp superintendents to the same critical analysis. On this her analysis remains exceedingly disappointing. And as for her remark that the Boer women did not present the scorched earth "as a part of the unaccountable punishment of innocents", I dare to state that with the British officers taking the law into their own hands, Spies clearly indicates they did, most farms were burnt down *not* because there had been incidents of violence by the Boers, but because they were potential shelters for the Boers. Therefore one can state that these were presented as unaccountable punishment of innocents.

On the incidence or absence of trauma among camp inmates, Stanley writes without understanding or sympathy that some inmates were possibly traumatised, but immediately rejects this by stating that existing testimony shows no signs of an inability to "speak", nor that there were things deemed unspeakable.⁵⁴ She is clearly unaware of the difficulty of most camp inmates, with their Calvinist background, to talk or write about their experiences, at least the Afrikaners can testify that for many years Ouma was not prepared to talk about the camps - this only changed in the 1970s. And then Stanley is at it again about the racial prejudice of the Afrikaner by claiming that insofar as the texts, this "lies in the palpable gulf between the writers' assumption of innate racial superiority and the reality of treating them as the same as or even inferior to black people". White settlers in colonies all over the world were considered superior, and so did British doctors and camp superintendents. Stanley merely settles the matter by writing "such things happened" - an easy way to explain British actions against black and Boer women and children.

Stanley, following Elizabeth van Heyningen, makes an error of reasoning when she remarks that the death rate of white children before the war did not differ much from the death rate in the concentration camps.⁵⁵ The number of white children (22 000) was probably a quarter of the number of white children in the camps. And it is true that perhaps ten Boer children, perhaps two did not reach adulthood before the war. But these two deaths occurred over twenty years, and the parents had the opportunity, over time, to accept the loss, whereas most deaths occurred in a few dreadful months - and that under the British authorities who were promptly, and understandably, blamed.

Stanley's criticism of the post-war presentations by Neethling, Postma and Steenkamp should be measured against the fact that they were published without any changes. If she had used Brandt-Van Warmelo's diary properly, and had consulted Kezia Hamman's *Dagboek van 'n Bethulie Kampdogter; Tant Miem Fischer se Kampdagboek*; and A.D. Lüder's *Endurance*, she would have had a more nuanced understanding of the circumstances than she presents. "alternative" views.

Her prejudice goes further. When a group of Boer women thank Superintendent Henry Kemball Cook for providing clothing for the orphans, they write that the youngest is very proud of her nice dress and pinafore "and as soon as her mother can get them to wear them". Thereupon Stanley declares: "Indicating she might have been hit [by one of the women]." Wasn't there perhaps something wrong with her face because of the poor quality of food, or am I making a mistake as Stanley does?

There are other examples of Stanley reading more into the text than the author clearly intended. She writes "Generalisations about women and children recur across both popular and academic writing about the camps, the impression, albeit by implication, that it was mainly women who died."⁵⁷ I have checked four of the si

For Mohlamme and Spies she gives the wrong page references, because on the page numbers she gives to the number of deaths. Kessler states: "... the total deaths in all the camps for whites ... were 27 927", and 28 000 white women and children died in the concentration camps." I do not read in either of these statements writers suggest, even by implication, that deaths of women were in the majority. Even Steenkamp's *He* correctly identifies as a post/memory book that aggressively promotes Afrikaner nationalism, acknowledging children in his Preface by remarking that he wants to do homage to "daardie heldinne en heldjies wat konsentrasiekampe gely en gesterf het". Two pages further down, Steenkamp gives the number of deaths and attempts to create the impression that the women were in the majority.

In the same vein, Stanley wants to know why there was a shift from local mourning for children in 1906 to the commemoration of women as "mothers of the fatherland", embodied in the Women's Memorial. The reason is in the fact that President Steyn declared during the course of the Anglo-Boer War that a monument to the Boers should be erected after the war. This was probably the reason why it was felt that the 1906 decision was out of line.

Stanley decides that the words "Dit is ons erens", carved into the path leading to the Taalmonument, in fact have little meaning. In her view, their meaning only becomes clear when one looks at the immensity of the mountain, citing atop the mountain.⁵⁸ In doing so, she reveals her ignorance of the history of Afrikaans and of the Boers. Between 1905 and 1908 J.H. Hofmeyr, Gustav Preller and D.F. Malan debated these very words on the mountain.

The word "commando" is consistently used incorrectly. A commando was a Boer fighting unit, comparable to a regiment or battalion. Stanley, however, uses it for a member of an attacking force (which has been the case since the Second World War). She should have used "burgher" or Boer.

It is irritating to be quoted incorrectly. Stanley reckons that it is debatable whether the ordinary burgher was aware of the full extent of what was happening in the camps. She adds: "Pretorius suggests there was little awareness of the camps." ⁵⁹ No, I said that no evidence could be found that the Boer leaders and burghers were aware that the camps had *declined* after October 1901.⁶⁰

Elizabeth Stanley undoubtedly has contributed to our knowledge of the Anglo-Boer War with her studies. In this she is an excellent theoretical expert, but in this particular publication I do not find her a successful historian.

The article by Elizabeth van Heyningen, researcher in the Department of Historical Studies at the University of Cape Town, in a recent edition of the *South African Journal of Science*⁶¹ took me somewhat by surprise, because I have always regarded her as a balanced historian. In this article, however, she makes a number of contentious statements on the conditions during the Anglo-Boer War that cannot go unchallenged. In particular, she claims that after the high mortality rate in 1901, a modern public health system was introduced that taught Afrikaners for the first time to make use of the camps. In her opinion, the camps were therefore, in her opinion, a tool of modernisation in early twentieth-century South Africa.

At least two serious objections can be brought against Van Heyningen's presentation. My major objection is that she does not look at the camp inmates in a nuanced way. She maintains that bywoners (landless paupers) were in the majority and that (all) the Boer landowners were peasants. She makes no provision for educated large-scale landowners or even lower middle class values among the Boers.

Secondly, Van Heyningen's use of sources on the alleged lack of knowledge on sanitation and hygiene is particularly one-sided. She basically accepts only the version presented in the British Blue Books, the British government publications, and statements in the archives written by camp officials. It is therefore hardly surprising that her presentation is one-sided. Add to this that she uncritically accepts these British sources. She does not take into account that British camp superintendents would probably have generalised about the hygiene of the camp inmates. The reaction of the camp superintendents to the deaths: "Their way out of it is to abuse the Dutch as a whole, and in particular, as brutal, heartless, ignorant people who deliberately murder their children with foolish religious and subjective judgments by the camp officials show that the sources should be approached with caution." This is the other side to the issue, and the historian has to consider them all.

I have singled out a number of Van Heyningen's statements that require reaction.

In the first place she claims: "Boer farms often lacked any form of sanitation. Accounts of Boer sanitary graphic and so frequent that there can be no doubt that most of the Boers in the camps, who were by class, lived in comfortable association with human and animal excrement."⁶³

It is not true that bywoners formed the majority of camp inmates - there were not that many bywoners sons (who are still in their twenties) of a man of means who are farming on their father's property, be Surely not. Furthermore, Van Heyningen provides no proof that any form of sanitation was "often" lac

Cultural historians do not agree with Van Heyningen's point of view. Mauritz Naudé of the Cultural Hi reckons that although there is no archaeological proof of shaft toilets on farms before the war, to trace archaeologically is extremely difficult. Annemarie Carelse of the same institution declares that oral evi Pioneer House in Silverton and the Willem Prinsloo farm in the Pretoria district, for example, both hac before the war.⁶⁴ Claudia Gouws, who completed a Masters dissertation at North-West University on v the rural Highveld homestead between 1840 and 1940, points out that prior to the war, when a white fa long enough, a shaft toilet was often dug outside the house, three metres deep and below the drinking has to distinguish between various social classes, because this habit was surely not a general practice. men would seek out the hills to perform their body functions, while many women used the well-know that was emptied in the morning in a hole some distance from the house.⁶⁵

Van Heyningen quotes from the reports of camp superintendents and the Ladies Commission when sl inmates had to be prevented from fouling the ground around their tents, from throwing out slops and difficulty, had to be persuaded to use the communal latrines.⁶⁶ This might well have been the case am - probably some bywoners, but might also have included people who were too ill to go to the toilets, c Commission recognised, children who were incapable of reaching the high toilets. In addition, accord Commission, the trench type of toilet made it difficult for children and the elderly to use. Moreover, or the traumatic effect the destruction of their homesteads and farms; the often harsh removal to the con suffering and deaths in the camps. All this must have preyed on the minds of the inmates. Correctly, D letter in Beeld of 22 June 2010 states that there were many noble and cultivated Boer women who wen these circumstances.

Incidentally, Emily Hobhouse warned against making generalisations on the camps in a letter of 10 M "I wish you could impress on the English public that one can't speak generally about these camps or t women therein".⁶⁷

A second point (which links up with Stanley's) is Van Heyningen's objection that most of the written r concentration camps in the Anglo-Boer War is limited to the suffering and deaths of the Boer women a

My reaction: Understandably there is a negative fe eling among English historians that Afrikaner leade used and misused the suffering in the camps to promote Afrikaner nationalism. But Van Heyningen sh this suffering was indeed the experience that made the greatest impression on their minds. The facts th that this was subsequently mythologised, should not be confused.

A third point. She claims that the British found it necessary in the camps to utilise the preventative hea by the end of the nineteenth century, including the use of statistics, clean water, and effective sanitatio adapted to provide enough nutrition and to expose the Boer women to modern nursing and infant car this comes her statement that once Lord Milner finally grasped the dire nature of the health situation i recruited properly qualified staff from Britain.⁶⁸

My comment: Van Heyningen jumps too easily to the improved position in the camps in 1902 - impro Emily Hobhouse's unpopular exposure in Britain of conditions in the camps, whereupon the governn Ladies Commission in August 1901. The commission made recommendations for improvement and s took over the administration of the camps in November 1901, ensuring that the recommendations wei why there were improvements in 1902. This does not come to the fore in the article. Big deal - the surv

from a laudable British administration.

Fourthly, Van Heyningen makes the statement that the British nurses were seen by the Boer women as "examples of gentility and femininity to the Boer peasantry". Equally uncritically, Van Heyningen, in the standpoint of the Transvaal director of the burgher camps, who wrote to Governor Maxwell:

The moral effect of the association of these earnest noble-minded and cultivated ladies, with their veld ... cannot fail to be productive of much good in many ways, and especially in softening the enmity... of the Boer women against the British name.⁶⁹

Can anybody (and this includes Van Heyningen) be more out of touch with reality?

Finally, Van Heyningen states: "An infrastructure was established in the camps that familiarised the Boer women with the routines ..." And:

Whatever [the Boer women] learned in the way of sanitation of infant care, was reinforced after the emergence of [Afrikaans] women's organisations and journals that attempted to inculcate middle-class values. They strove to unite Afrikaner women under the umbrella of the volksmoeder ideology.⁷⁰

It is clear that she gives the "lessons learnt" by the Boer women about sanitation in the concentration camps too much credit. It was rather these Afrikaner women's organisations such as the Suid-Afrikaanse Vrouefederasie, the Christelike Vrouevereniging, and periodicals such as *Die Huisvrou* that educated Afrikaner women on sanitation. I expect a more circumspect approach from Van Heyningen.

In conclusion, it seems to me that there are historians who hurriedly acknowledge that the suffering at the camps were regrettable, only to launch an attack against the misuse of this suffering by Afrikaner nationalists. In the process, they cast suspicion on testimonies by Boer women, as if nothing they said was true. It is to shift the blame away from the neglect and poor administration of the British authorities. Significantly, the Blue Books or other archival documents by superintendents who were obviously covering for themselves. The truth about the camps is much more complicated and nuanced than the portrayal presented by the historians.

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